



A dark, grainy photograph of Mike Myers as Austin Powers. He is wearing a white shirt and a watch, and is holding a large, dark, spotted object (possibly a fruit or a prop) in his hand. The background is dark and out of focus.

members only

She's a sexy recording artist, he's a Canadian bloke with no chin. With the world bracing itself for *Goldmember*, *Empire* misbehaves with Beyoncé Knowles and Mike Myers.

WORDS SHANE SUTTON, WILLIAM THOMAS, AND TIM OGLETHORPE/PLANET SYNDICATION

“Yes, it’s an embarrassment of riches,” Mike Myers shrugs apologetically. “I feel like a combination of Hugh Hefner and James Bond.”

Myers is referring to the collection of beauties who have shared screen time with the orthodontically challenged secret agent Austin Powers. The latest addition to a harem that already includes Heather Graham and Elizabeth Hurley, is Beyoncé Knowles, sometime singer with Destiny’s Child (you’ve heard of them). And despite sporting an afro that puts Willie Mason to shame, Knowles has managed to make the sassy Foxy Cleopatra the sexiest Powers girl to date.

“Oh, yeah, my outfits are very sexy,” the actress giggles, before destroying the sauciness of the image a bit by adding, “I’m getting the chance to wear all the clothes that my mom wore in her day – all the hip-huggers, all the cool ’70s clothes.”

And how does Austin’s creator rate himself in the sexiness stakes? “I’m just an actor playing a part, and not a very attractive actor at that,” he sighs. “Let me see, now – I am five-foot-nothing, I have no chin, and I still suffer from acne. Now how sexy is that? If you want sex appeal you need to look at the kind of guys we spoof. We might laugh at them but, in a way, it’s a tribute too. Because these guys are – or were – real sex symbols!”

“I feel like a combination of Hugh Hefner and James Bond.”



MIKE MYERS

For Powers’s new adventure, the list of satirical targets has broadened to include ’70s blaxploitation heroes such as Shaft, Superfly, Foxy Brown, and Cleopatra Jones. Of course, Beyoncé Knowles can’t remember the ’70s, due to the small matter of her being born in Houston, Texas, in 1981. “I have hockey equipment older than she is,” Myers laughs.

Knowles has been in show business since she was 7, the age at which she won a local talent contest. “I got up and sang this song and became a whole different person,” she recalls. “It shocked the crap out of my mom and dad.” Crap-shocked-out-of they



Hair-raising stuff: Beyoncé Knowles on the set of *Goldmember*.

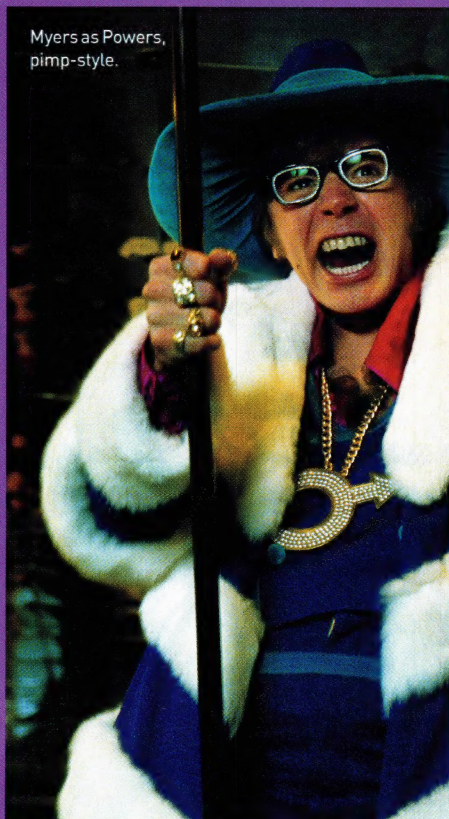


Pop, look and listen: Michael Caine as Nigel Powers.



Remember Xanadu?

Myers as Powers, pimp-style.



may have been, but Mr and Mrs Knowles were very supportive of their daughter, Beyoncé's father quitting his job to act as manager of her group Girl Tyme. The gamble paid off and the girls – by now a quartet called Destiny's Child – signed to Columbia in 1997. Two years later, the *Writing's On The Wall* album arrived, and Knowles's world hasn't been the same since. Despite ongoing personnel problems (she denies that she rules the group like a diva), Destiny's Child are currently the world's most successful girl band (sorry, Bardot), and chief songwriter Knowles has become a millionaire many times over.

While the filmmakers were immediately won over – “She nailed it,” comments producer John Lyons – others took more convincing. Over 3000 Powers fans launched an online petition to have her barred from the movie. There were also rumours that the perfectionist Myers was becoming increasingly frustrated with Knowles's inability to remember her lines. It's an accusation that *Austin Powers* series director Jay Roach was quick to scupper. “Beyoncé not only knows her lines,” he said at the time, “but every performance beat.”

In fact, any line-fluffing should probably be blamed on chronic ad-libber Myers. “The hardest thing was trying not to

“I grew up surrounded by English culture – everything from Monty Python to movies like *Alfie*.”

MIKE MYERS

So how did the singer with a band famous for their male-bashing lyrics come to appear opposite a character whose most likely response to a Destiny's Child promo would be to bash himself? “I did *Austin Powers* because it was a huge opportunity for me. I never thought I'd get the part, not in a million years. I was so nervous. They asked me if I wanted to go into comedy, and I was like, ‘Well, I don't know if I'd be good.’ Afterwards, I was like, ‘You dummy, what did you just say? Oh God.’ But I was just being honest because I didn't know.”

laugh,” Knowles chuckles. “That's what I had to concentrate on. Mike is just so funny.”

And now *Goldmember*'s in the can, how does she feel about her work in the picture? “I'm nervous about it all. It's very scary for me. It makes me feel a bit more comfortable that the first time people see me in the movie, I'm up there dancing, doing what they are used to seeing me doing. But, I can't rate myself as an actress yet. I've been singing since I was five and I can't even rate myself as a singer! I'm a perfectionist and I don't think I'll ever be satisfied with anything I've done.”

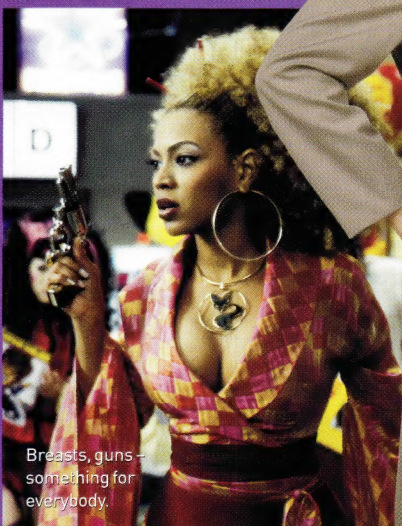
“I will survive,” she adds, no disco-era pun apparently intended, with regard to the possibility that'll she stink as an actress. “I'll be sad, of course, but I'll still have Destiny's Child [and a solo career that to date includes the *Goldmember* theme song], and I am first a musician. That's what takes some of the pressure off. But it's very, and I mean veeeeeeery, important to me that I'm good at this.”

It's also pretty crucial for Myers that *Goldmember* wins big. While *The Spy Who Shagged Me* performed healthily enough at the box office, the actor has seen both his *Saturday Night Live* spin-off feature *Sprockets* and his bid to become the next Inspector Clouseau collapse.

To ensure success, Myers has given himself even more to do (in addition to writing, producing and playing Powers, Dr Evil, and Fat Bastard, he'll essay ageing Lothario Goldmember who lost his meat and two veg in a smelting accident), signed ➤

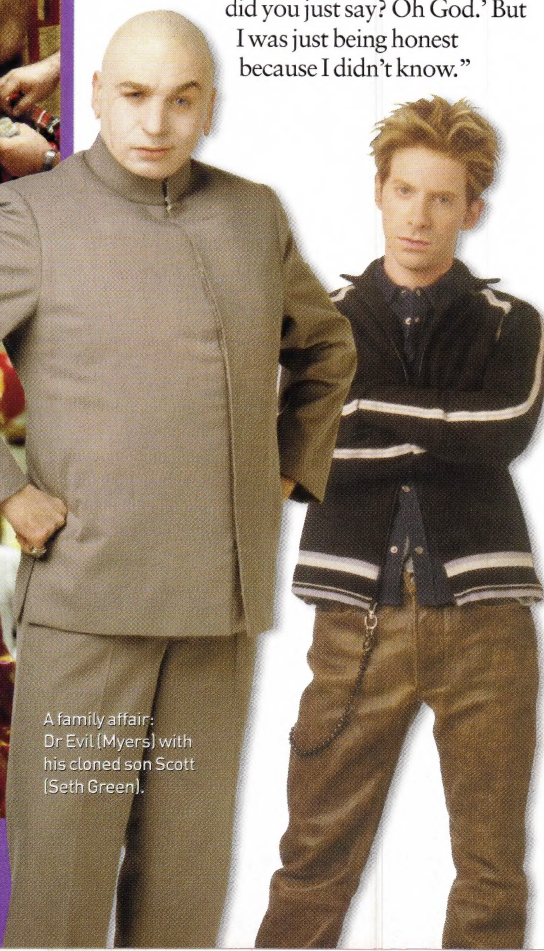


Final touches applied to Myers's Fat Bastard for a sumo sequence.



Breasts, guns – something for everybody.

A family affair: Dr Evil (Myers) with his cloned son Scott (Seth Green).



up '60s icon Michael Caine to play Austin's old man, Nigel Powers, and recruited some of the biggest names in movies to beef up the picture's cameo count.

Myers is understandably ecstatic about having the two-time-Academy Award winning Caine along for the ride. "Michael is a great hero of mine. Because my dad was English, I grew up surrounded by English culture - everything from TV shows like Monty Python to movies like *Alfie* and *The Italian Job*. So to work with Michael was an honour and a privilege. I know that sounds like luvvie-speak but I genuinely mean it. And Michael's a great guy, into the bargain."

Although Caine may introduce Powers's charms to a new audience, the great success of *Goldmember* will hinge on whether audiences want to sit through another 90 minutes of Myers's arch anglo-centric wit.

The actor is particularly keen to see the series endure since *Austin Powers* is intrinsically linked to his father, the Liverpool-born Eric Myers, who died from Alzheimer's Disease eight years ago, just prior to his son's big *SNL* breakthrough.

"I'm sure my father would be smiling if he could see Austin strutting his stuff."

MIKE MYERS

"Dad was a man I respected and loved a great deal and I miss him terribly," reminisces Myers, who still carries a British passport and often refers to himself as English rather than Canadian. "One of the reasons I am so happy about the success of Austin Powers is that it works as a tribute to Dad. The Englishness of the films, the Englishness of Austin himself, is a tribute to the country of his birth and I'm sure Dad would be smiling if he were still around to see Austin strutting his stuff. I certainly hope he would be."

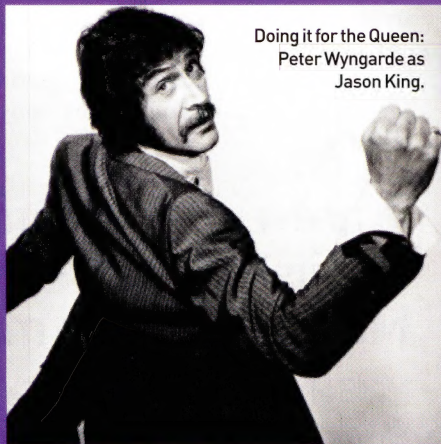
With *Goldmember* enjoying an opening weekend of \$US70 million in America, you can rest assured that Powers's shag wagon won't stop rocking just yet.

◆ *Austin Powers In Goldmember* is out on September 19 and is reviewed on page 31.

man of STEAL

Five characters who gave Austin his shagadelic powers.

WORDS RICHARD LUCK



Doing it for the Queen:
Peter Wyngarde as
Jason King.

◀ JASON KING

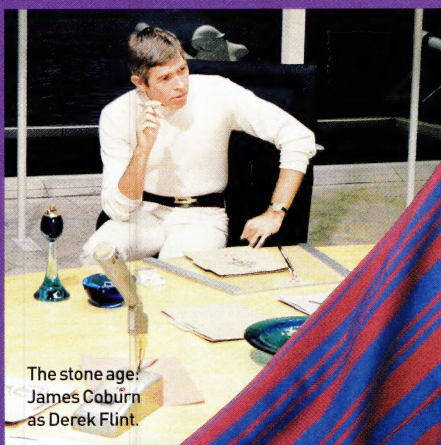
Ever wondered what the origins of Austin's smooth style and even smoother demeanour were? Look no further than *Department S*'s Jason King. Played by English actor Peter Wyngarde (who seemingly borrowed Queen guitarist Brian May's hair for the part), King was seldom seen without a glass of wine in his hand and a crushed-velvet jacket on his back. A man for whom irony was like silvery - only made of iron, King was a man who believed women should have their place - prone.

DEREK FLINT ▼

James Coburn's polo-neck-wearing secret agent-cum-Renaissance Man actually appears in *The Spy Who Shagged Me* courtesy of a brief clip from his second big-screen adventure *In Like Flint* (the Flint films' theme is also Austin's picturephone ringtone). Boasting a mean karate chop, Flynt benefited from the fact that Coburn studied martial arts under Bruce Lee and the writers knew how to have fun with their exotic jack-of-all-trades. "You flew all the way to Moscow to watch a ballet," mocks his boss. "Not to watch," Flint replies. "To teach."



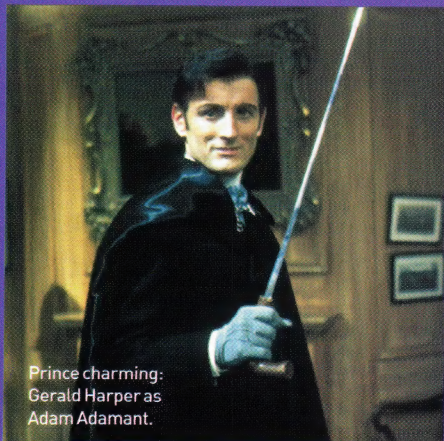
Quacking up:
Patrick McGeehan
as John Drake.



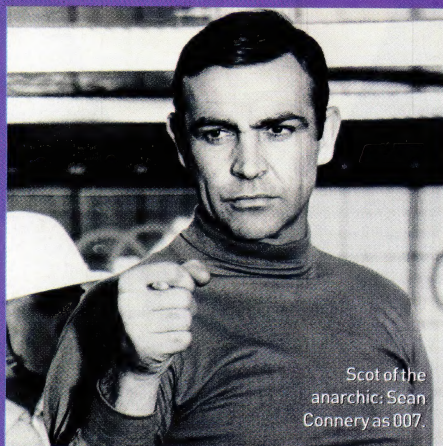
The stone age:
James Coburn
as Derek Flint.

ADAM ADAMANT ▽

Played by Gerald Harper, Adam Adamant was a dandified Edwardian adventurer who was frozen alive by his arch-enemy The Face in the early 1900s, only to be reanimated in the mid-'60s where the lovely Georgina Jones (Juliet Harmer) helped him adapt to modern life and resume his crime-fighting career. Any coincidence between writer Brian Clemens's creation and Austin is purely intentional.



Prince charming:
Gerald Harper as
Adam Adamant.



Scot of the
anarchic: Sean
Connery as 007.

JAMES BOND ▲

But more specifically 007 as played by Sean Connery around the time of *You Only Live Twice*, the film that single-handedly inspired Dr Evil (his look, uniform and attitudes are modelled on Donald Pleasence's incarnation of Ernst Stavro Blofeld), his cavernous secret layers (complete with piranha pool to devour underachieving agents), specific lines (the "men come before women" jacuzzi dialogue), and Austin's magnificent chest hair (Myers is on record as saying Connery is a man "not so much hairy as macraméed.")

◀ JOHN DRAKE

The original Secret Agent (the show was also known as *Danger Man*), Drake set the pace for pre-007 secret agent cool – a peaceable character like Austin, Drake (played by Patrick McGeehan, the first man to be offered the role of Bond) rarely carried a gun and seldom killed. With Jay Roach making liberal use of the Secret Agent theme towards the end of the first *Austin Powers* movie, it's worth noting that McGeehan's other small-screen creation *The Prisoner* also has a hold on the Powers franchise, influencing some of the uniforms and inspiring the name of Robert Wagner's *Number Two*.

little big man

Verne Troyer on growing up and making it big.

Standing just 80cm, it's hard to think of Verne Troyer having actually grown up. But as the *Goldmember* actor's height hasn't prevented him from mounting an assault on stardom, so his shortage of centimetres didn't make his childhood as miserable as you might imagine.

"I had a lot of friends," explains the actor. "I was accepted. I'm not saying I didn't get harassed a bit but in my senior year, I was Homecoming King."

From Homecoming King to Hollywood star: exactly how is life after Austin? "It's altered dramatically. I have so many opportunities that I never had before."

Starting out in the business as a stuntman, Troyer was a fan of the Powers series prior to his involvement ("I really liked the first one."). As for securing the role of Mini-Me, he puts it all to good fortune. "I was just in the right spot at the right time. I came in to meet Jay Roach, and the next the day they called and said I had the part. It was amazing." Successful as he's been, life still has more than its fair share of challenges for the diminutive star. Female company, however, isn't one of them. "I don't want to brag," laughs the actor, who recently appeared in a *Playboys* spread as Mini-Hef. "As far as meeting girls, I never had any problems before *Austin*. But since *Austin*, it's become a bit easier."

Michael Adams ♦

